

The Family

THE OLD MAN'S DREAM.

Oh for one hour of youthful joy!
Give back my twentieth spring!
I'd rather laugh a bright-haired boy,
Than reign a gray-haired king!

Off with the wrinkled spoils of age!
Away with learning's crown!
Tear out life's wisdom-written page,
And dash its trophies down!

One moment let my life-blood stream
From boyhood's fount of flame!
Give me one giddy, reeling dream
Of life all love and fame!

My listening angel heard the prayer.
And calmly smiling, said,
"If I but touch thy silvered hair,
Thy hasty wish hath sped.

"But is there nothing in thy track
To bid thee fondly stay,
While the soft seasons hurry back
To find the wished-for day?"

"Ah, truest soul of womankind!
Without thee what were life?
One bliss I can not leave behind:
I'll take—my—precious—wife!"

The angel took a sapphire pen,
And wrote in rainbow dew,
"The man would be a boy again,
And be a husband, too!"

"And is there nothing yet unsaid
Before the change appears?
Remember, all the gifts have fled
With these dissolving years!"

"Why, yes; for memory would recall
My fond paternal joys;
I could not bear to leave them all;
I'll take—my—girl—and boys!"

The smiling angel dropped his pen—
"Why, this will never do;
The man would be a boy again,
And be a father, too!"

And so I laughed—my laughter woke
The household with its noise—
And wrote my dream, when morning
broke,
To please the gray-hair'd boys.
—Oliver W. Holmes.

JOHN'S LETTER TO SANTA CLAUS, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

"Let's tie it to the kite, James, and send it away up into the sky, and it will reach Santa Claus before Christmas. It is two weeks yet till time for him to come; Mother said so today." So the little brothers tied the note, to Santa, on the kite, and sent it up. A strong gust of wind carried it on and on far out of sight. "Now," said John with a big sigh of relief, "I'm so glad it has gone, and we will get what I asked for." The children then ran in, to tell their mother how John had sent his letter to Santa

Claus. Far down the street a young stranger saw a little piece of paper fluttering before him. On it came, and alighted on his breast, held there for an instant, by a passing gust. He put up his hand to remove it, and was about to cast it from him, when the childish print caught his eye. He read these words: "Dear Santa Claus: Please bring Mother and Father, and Brother James and sister Adalyn lots of things for Christmas, and me a Shetland pony named Brownie. That is all I want. John Lewis." After reading it over, he said to himself: "Here is something that will interest Mother; I'll send it to her. So he went to the post-office and mailed it, with a note to his Mother, telling her how it came into his hands, and that he knew the child's father, who was a home missionary to the people of that place, and was trying his best to do them good, but Satan had ruled that section for a long time, and had a mighty hold on the people, and the minister's work often met with rebuff and insult. His family was in very poor circumstances, and he had often wished to help them, but did not know how to go about it, but thought perhaps she, who had helped so many, would know a nice, delicate way, so that no feelings of pride could be hurt, and by putting the note into her hands he would relieve his own conscience, and give her a piece of work that he knew she would take delight in doing. The mother read the notes over and over. The one from little John, the Home Missionary's boy, and the one from her John, the millionaire's son. She quickly made up her mind what she wished to do and went about it. Before her head touched the pillow that night, boxes and barrels packed with good things for the pleasure and comfort of the minister's family, and a pretty little Shetland pony for John, with saddle and bridle, were on their way, bound for the Home Missionary's place. They were sent to her son, with instructions to turn them over to Santa Claus at the proper time, and how well he carried out her wishes we shall see.

When Santa started out on his usual yearly round, he said to Mrs. Santa, "I'm so sorry that I did not get to carry John a Shetland pony last Christmas, you know he wrote and asked me for one, but I just could not get one ready for him; and he will be dreadfully disappointed this time, if he awakes on Christmas morning and finds none. You know it makes my heart ache not to give my girls and boys what they ask me for, and what I know their dear little hearts wish so much. So I am going over to Mr. Brown's this morning first of all, and see if he has any nice Shetland ponies, and get one, that John may have it after waiting so long." Then the dear old fellow harnessed up his reindeer, put in loads of good things, and started out saying: "Come, Dancer and Prancer and Dasher and Vixen, and Cupid and Comet and Dunder and Plitzen, fly over the hills and over the snow. And find a nice pony for John, you know." And all the

pretty reindeer seemed to understand, and each one nodded his little head as he bounded forward. Away they went, over hill and dale, making the crisp snow snap and flash under their swift flying hoofs. Soon Mrs. Brown's was reached and Santa Claus drew up with a whoa! that quickly brought the old gentleman to the door. "Good morning, Mr. Brown," said Santa Claus. "Good morning Santa Claus; what can I do for you this morning?" "Well," said Santa Claus, "I came over to see if you had any nice Shetland ponies." "Just lots of them; what kind do you want?" "Well, let me see what John did say." And he drew a little crumpled note from his pocket. "He says he does not want anything for himself but a Shetland pony, named Brownie. He asked me to bring his family lots of nice things, but only this one thing for himself. A great many children ask for such a quantity of things that I get tired before I get through the list. But when a little fellow like this asks for but one thing, and he so little that he has to print his letter, it nearly breaks my heart not to give it to him. And, now, I want your prettiest and fattest Brownie pony to be ready to take away in a few minutes." "Yes, sir"; said Mr. Brown, "she shall be ready for you, and she is fat, too, sir; as fat as a butter ball." "And Mr. Brown," said Santa Claus, "I want to look at those pretty little saddles, bridles and blankets, that you have for the little ponies. I want to get a nice 'squeaky' saddle, and a pretty bridle with red stones at the ears, and a cute little blanket with the 'lone star of Texas' on it. John lives in Texas, and I know that he would like the star." So they looked over the saddles, bridles and blankets, and found one of each to suit—the little squeaky saddle, a bridle with red stones at the ears, and a dear little blanket with a single golden star, to show outside the saddle. "Bless his dear little heart; I know he will be so pleased with these pretty things," said Santa, his own eyes beaming with pleasure. He put a halter on Brownie, and tied her to the back of the sleigh; put the bridle, saddle and blanket inside; drew up the reins; bade Mr. Brown good-bye, and away they went, little Brownie's hoofs keeping time to the merry music of the sleigh-bells as the reindeer skipped lightly over the snow.

We will now peep into little John's home, and see what is taking place there. He had gone to bed early on this Christmas eve, his eyes sparkling with anticipation—thinking of his letter to Santa Claus, and of the Shetland pony, that he was sure would be there next morning. "I know he will bring it, mother," he said, over and over, many times before he went to sleep. "I wrote and asked him and that is the way Summers did last Christmas, and he brought him one; and, mother, you know Summers has all the pretty things he wants, because his father is rich; and you know if anybody as good as Santa Claus would bring a